BAT MAN

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THE NEW DC
THERE'S NO STOPPING US NOW.

NIGHTMARES, INC.

HANNIGAN + JANSON

PROLOGUE: THE PROSPEROUS NEWHILL SECTION OF GOTHAM: NIGHT.

SO NICE OF YOU TO INVITE ME IN FOR A *DRINK*, SIMON.

THE PLATZ RESIDENCE IS AT YOUR DISPOSAL, GINA... BUT IF I RECALL, MY DEAR, IT WAS *YOUR* IDEA.

HMP.

THE *LIGHTS* WON'T WORK.

WHAT'S *WRONG?*

SAMUELS--?

BTUMP

WHAT WAS *THAT?*

SIMON, I'M FRIGHTENED.

JUST A *BLOWN FUSE*, GINA -- THIS WAY-- I'LL GET SOME *CANDLES* FROM THE HUTCH...

BUT I WONDER WHAT'S BECOME OF SAM--

UHN!

SAMUELS!

IT... IT'S *SAMUELS*-- WITH A *KNIFE* STUCK IN HIS *BACK!*

EEEEEEEE

OH MY GOD--!

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AGH-H!

GINA!!

NO!

N-NO...H!

NOOOOOO

YESSSSS.

P-PLEASE--DON'T KILL ME! DON'T *HURT* ME!

MONEY.. I'LL GIVE YOU *MONEY*--JEWELS --SILVER-- PAINTINGS-- UPSTAIRS--IN THE *SAFE!*

ANYTHING --I'LL GIVE YOU *ANYTHING* YOU WANT!

NO DEAL.

WE WANT *BLOOD!*

UPROUSED, THE BLADE GLITTERS IN THE GLOOM.

AND THEN, QUITE ABRUPTLY--

-- THE LIGHTS DO WORK.

SURPRISSSE!!

BAT MAN

SURPRISE ANGELS, MR. SIMON PLATZ -- AND I HOPE OUR SERVICES HAVE BEEN SATISFACTORILY AWARDED...

M-M-MONSTERS --?

NIGHTMARES, INC.

DENIS BRESSON / JOHN HEWITT & ALFREDO ALCALA / BOB CURE / ADRIENNE ROY / LEN WEIN
WRITER / ARTISTS / LETTERER / COLORIST / EDITOR

"MONSTERS"? THAT'S A FINE WAY TO GREET YOUR *PARTY GUESTS*, SIMON!

A *TRICK DAGGER*, SIR, WITH *PLASTIC BLOODSTAIN*-- I HOPE YOU DON'T *MIND*...

IT'S A *JOKE*, SIMON-- WE'RE PERFECTLY *ALL RIGHT*.

A J-JOKE...?

M-MASKS...!

THIS SHOT OF ADRENALIN AND ITS ATTENDANT THRILLS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED COURTESY OF *NIGHTMARES, INCORPORATED*-- YOUR EXPERTS IN TERROR-- AND I AM *NIGHTSHADE*, OWNER AND PROPRIETOR."!

SCHRECK-- LEE-- *COME!*

AND *SAMUELS*-- GETTING UP FROM THE *FLOOR*...

IT IS TIME TO RETURN TO THE *DARKNESS*... AND LEAVE OUR PATRONS TO THE MERRIMENT OF FAST-BEATING HEARTS--WHILE THE BEATS YET *CONTINUE*.

HA HA HA

A JOKE...

HA HA HA HA

JUST A... *J-JOKE*...

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CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

TWO MORNINGS LATER: WAYNE MANOR IS A VERY LARGE HOUSE, AND ON THIS DAWN OF BRIGHT SUN AND VERY LOUD BIRDS...

...IT SEEMS TWICE AS LARGE, AND ENTIRELY EMPTY.

I THOUGHT I MIGHT FIND YOU HERE, SIR.

WHY DO WE LIKE TO *DWELL* ON OUR MISERY, ALFRED?

YOU'D THINK THE *NATURAL* RESPONSE WOULD BE TO GET *AWAY* FROM IT.

PERHAPS MISERY CANNOT BE ESCAPED UNTIL *CONQUERED*, MASTER BRUCE.

YET I'M HARDLY PUTTING UP A FIGHT HERE IN JASON'S *EMPTY* ROOM...

IT'S MORE LIKE WALLOWING IN DISMAL *DEFEAT*.

PERHAPS YOU ARE MERELY STUDYING THE *ENEMY*, SIR...

...SUBCONSCIOUSLY PREPARING YOURSELF FOR THE BATTLE TO COME BY REMEMBERING WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT --"PSYCHING YOURSELF UP," I BELIEVE THE *ATHLETES* CALL IT.

I SUPPOSE, ALFRED...

BUT IT'S STRANGE THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT FIGHT OF MY LIFE SHOULD BE FOUGHT WITHOUT THE *BATMAN*--

--FOUGHT BY *LAWYERS*, IN FACT, IN A BLEAK *COURTROOM*, AND I DON'T EVEN *LIKE* LAWYERS...

YET THE BATMAN IS NOTHING MORE NOR LESS THAN ONE OF BRUCE WAYNE'S CONSIDERABLE *RESOURCES*.

IN THIS CASE, YOU'VE MERELY CHOSEN TO EMPLOY *OTHER* OF YOUR RESOURCES --AS APPROPRIATELY, YOU *SHOULD*.

OF COURSE, BUT... I JUST CAN'T SHAKE THIS FEELING OF BEING SO... GLOOMY... *DEPRESSED.*

JASON IS A *GOOD*, BRIGHT LAD, AND THE LIGHT HE'S BROUGHT INTO YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN TAKEN AWAY.

YOU *MISS* HIM, SIR, AS DO *I*.

FLYING--- TODD'S

AND YET IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD, ALFRED. WE'LL GET HIM BACK-- IN TIME-- AND WE HARDLY FELT THIS WAY WHEN *DICK* LEFT...

MASTER DICK WAS *READY* TO LEAVE--YOUR WORK WITH HIM WAS *FINISHED*.

YES... AND WITH JASON IT'S BARELY *BEGUN*. BUT I *MEAN* IT, ALFRED...

WE *WILL* GET HIM BACK, *WHATEVER* IT TAKES.

I KNOW, SIR, AND THAT KNOWLEDGE IS THE ONLY THING SAVING ME FROM MY *OWN* GLOOM...

...NOW THAT *JULIA* HAS GONE OFF ON HER OWN, AS WELL...

HOW *IS* YOUR DAUGHTER, ALFRED? GETTING ALONG WITH HER NEW JOB AT *PICTURE NEWS* -- WITH *VICKI VALE*?

SHE'S QUITE EXCITED ABOUT THE *JOB*, SIR, LESS CERTAIN ABOUT HER *EMPLOYER*.

BUT... SHOULDN'T YOU BE GETTING SOME *REST* NOW-- IF YOU'RE TO BE *SHARP* FOR THE *NIGHT*?

TRYING TO *NUDGE* ME INTO ESCAPE, ALFRED-- WITH *SLEEP* AND THE *BATMAN*?

SOMEHOW... THE APPEAL OF *BOTH* IS NOT WHAT IT *SHOULD* BE.

AND YET, SIR, EVEN IF YOUR LIFE IS *LESS* WITHOUT JASON...

CAN YOU AFFORD TO *STOP LIVING?*

NO... NO, I GUESS I CAN'T. GOTHAM HAS GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO THE BATMAN'S DARK FACE.

INTERESTING *BURGLARY* LAST NIGHT, SIR -- THE SIMON PLATZ RESIDENCE, IN THE *NEWHILL* SECTION.

WHILE *I* WAS CASTING A LONELY SHADOW WAY DOWN IN A SLEEPY *WAREHOUSE DISTRICT.*

NOT EVEN THE BATMAN CAN BE *EVERYWHERE*, SIR.

SUMMER SALE SAVE! 50% OFF SHEETS

NO. BUT MY EFFECT DEPENDS ON GIVING THAT *IMPRESSION.* AS FOR THIS BURGLARY, THE ADDRESS INDICATES ITS MAGNITUDE, BUT WHAT MAKES IT SO *INTERESTING?*

ON THE NIGHT *BEFORE*, THE HOUSE WAS HOST TO TWO THINGS...

A *PARTY*--AND A NOVELTY SERVICE CURRENTLY CHIC AMONG THE SMART SET.

"NOVELTY SERVICE."

IT'S CALLED "NIGHTMARES, INCORPORATED," SIR, AND FOR AN EXORBITANT FEE THEY WILL "ENACT THE FEAR FANTASY OF YOUR CHOICE."

SLOAN CIRCUS

GOTHAM SAVE

VAMPIRES, GHOSTS, HOMICIDAL SLASHERS--THEY CLAIM NOTHING IS TOO BIZARRE OR HORRIFYING FOR THEIR CREATIVE RESOURCES.

AND FOR AN *ADDITIONAL* PREMIUM THEY WILL, AH, *SURPRISE* YOU WITH A DELUXE OFFERING OF THEIR OWN CONCEPTION, STAGED TO ONE'S COMPLETE SATISFACTION, OR YOUR MONEY "LEERINGLY REFUNDED."

THE SINGING TELEGRAM SEEMS TO HAVE EVOLVED INTO, SHALL WE SAY? ... THE *SCREAMING SCENARIO.*

PEOPLE ACTUALLY *PAY* TO BE FRIGHTENED?

TO THE RICHLY JADED, SIR, I IMAGINE *CALL GIRL* SERVICES NO LONGER PROVIDE QUITE THE SAME DARK THRILL THEY ONCE DID.

AND I NOTICE THE YEAR'S TOP TEN FILMS INCLUDE FOUR HORROR TITLES, NOT TO MENTION A BESTSELLER LIST DOMINATED BY THE LIKES OF *STEPHEN KING*...

YES, I SUPPOSE THE ONLY ONES WHO *DON'T* LIKE TO BE SCARED ARE *CRIMINALS* --BECAUSE THEY SECRETLY KNOW THEY *DESERVE* IT.

AS YOU'LL SEE, SIR--

--THE NEWSWRITER ONLY MENTIONS THE SCARE SERVICE AS AN IRONIC HOOK TO WHAT *ACTUALLY* TRANSPIRED THE NEXT NIGHT, BUT...

BUT YOU THINK THERE'S A *CONNECTION*, ALFRED!

IT SEEMS WORTH *INVESTIGATION*, SIR. HOW OFTEN DO THE POLICE LEARN THAT A BURGLARIZED HOME WAS CASED BY THE TRASH COLLECTOR OR POOL CLEANER OR SOME DELIVERY MAN...?

MAYBE YOU *HAVE* GOT SOMETHING, ALFRED.

WAP

KIDNAPED

BOOKS OF SPORTS

THAT SAME EDITION HAS AN ADVERTISEMENT FOR NIGHTMARE, INC'S SERVICES ON PAGE 42, SIR.

The Gotl

ALFRED...

...IT OCCURS TO ME THAT I HAVEN'T AVAILED MYSELF OF YOUR CONVERSATION NEARLY *ENOUGH* LATELY.

THANK YOU, SIR.

...AND PERHAPS ONE DAY WE CAN DISCUSS WHY ON EARTH YOU CONSUME *COFFEE* BEFORE RETIRING FOR *SLEEP*.

QUITE SIMPLE, ALFRED.

AFTER A NIGHT AS THE BATMAN, *NOTHING* COULD KEEP ME *AWAKE*... BUT I DO LIKE MY DREAMS *PEPPY*.

THE GOTHAM CHILD WELFARE BUREAU:

NOW YOU BE SURE TO HAVE A GOOD DAY AT SCHOOL, JASON...

...AND MAYBE WHEN YOU GET BACK WE CAN GO FOR A WALK TOGETHER IN THE PARK.

I DON'T KNOW, AMANDA -- I'M FEELING KINDA TIRED...

DIDN'T SLEEP WELL AT ALL-- BAD DREAMS, I GUESS.

SMALL WONDER...

...WHAT WITH YOUR LIFE BEING SO STRAINED AND DISRUPTED SINCE YOUR PARENTS... AH, PASSED ON.

NO, THAT ISN'T IT AT ALL, AMANDA.

I THINK IT WAS JUST THE BED HERE.

YOU KNOW HOW IT IS WHEN YOU TRY TO SLEEP AWAY FROM HOME.

AND AMANDA GROSCZ STIFFENS.

NIGHT:

HOPE THE NEWSPAPER AD DIDN'T MISPRINT THE ADDRESS...

THE BATMAN HAS INVADED QUITE A FEW NIGHTMARES IN HIS TIME...

...BUT I'D HATE TO CREATE AN UNWARRANTED SCARE--

--BY LITERALLY INVADING THE WRONG PREMISES.

EH? IN THE OUTER OFFICE?

NO... THIS IS NIGHTMARES, INC., ALL RIGHT, AND THE PERSON RUNNING IT UNDER THE NAME OF "NIGHTSHADE" IS ACTUALLY ONE STURGES HELLSTROM.

AND HERE'S A LIST OF ALL HIS CLIENTS TO DATE-- INCLUDING ROUGH FLOOR PLANS OF EACH HOUSE, POSSIBLY FOR USE DURING EACH "FEAR SCENARIO"...

--LATEST ONE WENT VERY WELL, I SHOULD SAY. EH, LEE?

"LATEST ONE"-- BUT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT THE LATEST "NIGHTMARE" THEY'VE

I'LL BE IN THE OFFICE, WORKING ON OUR

IT'S A GOOD LIVING, HELLSTROM.

EXCELLENT--

...OF MEN'S BURGLARY AS ALLEGED SUSPECTS?

HMMM... DON'T REMEMBER LEAVING THAT WINDOW OPEN...

"TOOLS OF THE TRADE"...

AND I THINK IT'S TIME TO LEARN WHAT YOUR REAL TRADE *IS*, MR. NIGHTSHADE.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS:

HERE WE ARE-- *HELLSTROM, STURGES*...

WORKED FOR A WHILE AS *STUNTMAN* AND *SPECIAL EFFECTS TECHNICIAN* IN HOLLYWOOD--SPECIALIZING IN HORROR FILMS, FITTINGLY ENOUGH... FIRED FOR PETTY THIEVERY ON A FILM SET...

MUG-BOOKS JUST AIN'T WHAT THEY *USED* TO BE, HUH, BATMAN?

PICKED UP A YEAR LATER IN GOTHAM ON SUSPICION OF *BURGLARY*--BUT THE CHARGE COULDN'T STICK...

HELLSTROM, STURGES

WANTED FOR THE SLAUGHTER OF 11 OTHER TEENAGERS

ONTO SOMETHIN' *HOT*, ARE YA?

POSSIBLY, BULLOCK--BUT IF I *AM*, CREDIT FOR THE DETECTIVE WORK GOES TO SOMEONE ELSE

AND DON'T LOOK NOW, BUT I THINK YOU JUST DUMPED AN ENTIRE SOFTWARE PROGRAM--THE "H" DISK, TO BE *PRECISE*.

NOW I'LL HAFTA GO DOWN TO THE SPOOKY BASEMENT AND GET THE OLD *FIXER* FILES AND REPROGRAM THE WHOLE LOUSY THING, AND I *STILL* AIN'T GOTTEN THE HANG OF THESE LOUSY--

GONE AGAIN-- JUST LIKE A

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?! WHAT DO YOU WANT?! THIS IS PRIVATE PROPERTY!

THAT'S ENOUGH, MR. MANNERS, THREE WEEKS AGO TUESDAY--

--YOU ENGAGED IN A KINKY STUNT WHICH NO DOUBT SCARED THE *CARTIER* OFF YOUR PARTY GUESTS,

WHY DIDN'T YOU REPORT IT TO THE *POLICE*?

WELL, I...I DIDN'T WANT MY *NAMME* IN THE *PAPERS*--IT WOULD ONLY ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF *OTHER* BURGLARS...

MAYBE THE *SAME* BURGLARS--SINCE *THEY'RE* STILL *FREE*.

WH-WHY, OF ALL THE BALD IMPERTINENCE--

I'M SIMPLY MONITORING THE

--AND WHY DIDN'T YOU REPORT TO THE *POLICE*, MISS WRAY?

I...I DIDN'T WANT TO RISK CANCELLATION OF MY *INSURANCE*.

WHAT *GOOD* IS INSURANCE IF YOU DON'T *COLLECT*?

LET'S JUST SAY THERE ARE CERTAIN *OTHER* VALUABLES ON THE PREMISES WHICH THE BURGLARS FAILED TO *DISCOVER*,

CONTINUED ON PAGE FOLLOWING

I HEAR THERE'S AN ELEMENT OF [illegible] ATTACHED TO THIS [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

ACTUALLY, I'M ONLY DOING WHAT *ANY* GOOD ASSISTANT DOES -- HELPING HER BOSS ATTAIN HER GOALS...

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

...I'VE GOT A GOOD MIND TO STRAIGHTEN YOUR CURLS [illegible]

WHILE THE ATTENTION IS EXTREMELY *FLATTERING*, LADIES, ALFRED INFORMS ME THAT A VISIT TO THE [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[

CAREFUL, BOSS-- YOUR COMPLEXION IS STARTING TO MATCH THE SHADE OF YOUR *HAIR DYE.*

JULIA, ARE YOU FRENCH DAMES *ALWAYS* SO--

HEY! WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *LIGHTS?!*

NOBODY MOVE...

...LEST YOUR DEEPEST *NIGHTMARES* COME *TRUE...*

UPSTAIRS:

THERE'S *ONE* OF H'S CRONES...

APPARENTLY AN *ART CONNOISSEUR.*

AND IN THE MASTER BEDROOM:

...MORE INTERESTED IN WHAT LIES *BEHIND* THE CANVAS.

AND HERE'S THE *OTHER* ONE ..

I'VE LEARNED WHAT I WANTED-- THEY'RE *CASING THE JOINT*, ALL RIGHT, NO DOUBT *CHECKING* THE *ALARM SYSTEMS* AS WELL AS THE LOCATION OF *VALUABLES*..

AND NOW IT'S TIME TO GET BACK TO THE [illegible]

...TO BE SUITABLY ATTIRED [illegible]

BEHOLD *NIGHTSHADE* -- THE LURKER IN DEEPEST *DARKNESS*..

OH I HOPE THIS IS ONLY A *DREAM*...

...THE DARKNESS OF DEMONIC *DREAMS* AND DREADED *DEATH*!...

THAT CAN'T BE *REAL*!

THE PERFORMANCE IS NO LONGER *AMUSING*, IF EVER IT *WAS*.

TAKE HEED, AND BEWARE OF *NIGHTMARES* MORTAL MAN...

...FOR THE SPELL OF *PERMANENT SLEEP* CAN--

--AND I [illegible]

I SAID THE JOKE HAS GONE ON *LONG ENOUGH*, MR. NIGHTSHADE--

N'I FACE--!

PLEASE RECEIVE THE [illegible] ICE.

IT HAD PROVEN TO BE IN GRUESOME TASTE.

HOW NICE TO...

[illegible] NICE [illegible] ALREADY [illegible] TO ACQUAINTED [illegible]

[illegible]

AND BE ADVISED THAT YOUR BUSINESS WILL BE *REFUSED* IN THE FUTURE.

PLEASE - DON'T ENRAGE ME ANY MORE, MR. BO[illegible].

[illegible]

[illegible] -- [illegible] CERTAINLY [illegible]

NOW, IF ALFRED WOULD UNCORK SOME WINE OF THE [illegible]

MUCH AS I HATE TO [illegible] BOSS, THIS BRUCE WAY[illegible] INTRIGUING EACH TIME [illegible] SPECTACULAR[illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

LATER...

I'M *CONVINCED*, ALFRED, BUT I STILL NEED *PROOF*-- SOME OF THE STOLEN GOODS FOR *EVIDENCE*.

I WAS *INTERRUPTED* THE OTHER NIGHT, BUT NOW I'LL MAKE A MORE *THOROUGH* SEARCH OF NIGHTMARES, INC.

GOOD LUCK, SIR! NOW THAT THEY'VE CASED THE *MANOR*--

-- IT WOULD BE NICE IF YOU COULD *NAB* THEM BEFORE THEY COME BACK TO BURGLE *US*.

AND, IN THE OUTER OFFICE OF NIGHTMARES, INC...

I TELL YOU *NO ONE RECOGNIZED MY FACE!* AND IF THEY *DID*, SO WHAT? I'VE NEVER BEEN CONVICTED OF *ANYTHING!*

FINE, HELLSTROM-- BUT I STILL SAY THIS SCHEME IS WEARING *THIN!* SOONER OR LATER SOMEBODY'S *GOT* TO MAKE THE CONNECTION...

...THE COPS, THE BATMAN -- EVEN SOME PRIVATE DICK HIRED BY ONE OF OUR MILLIONAIRE MARKS!

LOOK, IF YOU DON'T *LIKE* IT, SCHRECK, YOU CAN JUST *GET OUT!* MY *SILENT PARTNER* NEVER WANTED ME TO USE YOU IN THE *FIRST PLACE!*

TWENTY MINUTES LATER, A CHILLING SHADOW ECLIPSES THE MOON...

CLEANED OUT -- ALL THE RECORDS *GONE!*

THEY MUST HAVE FELT THE HEAT AND SPLIT.

BUT IN THE BATCAVE OFFICE...

GOOD LORD--!

HELLSTROM'S DEAD!!

THEY MUST HAVE HAD A *FALLING OUT* AMONGST THEMSELVES...

THE OTHER TWO KILLED HIM TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE *LOOT* AND --

FHWOOM

AGH-H!

CHUDT

UHN!

A TRICK OF THE *TRADE*, BATMAN...

BUT *THIS* BLADE, I ASSURE YOU--

INSTEAD OF A *POINT*, NOTHING BUT A PHONY *PLASTIC BLOODSTAIN!*

--IS *VERY REAL!*

FWHLLLZZ-SHUNK

FRAK

SHRANKT

YOU'RE BETTER THAN I *EXPECTED* BATMAN...

... BUT I'M *NOT* WITHOUT MY *RESOURCES*...

... AND AS YOU KNOW, *ANYTHING* CAN HAPPEN IN A *NIGHTMARE!*

FRY IN HELL, SCUM!!

FROOOM

FLAMES ARE TOO *INTENSE*--

--CAN'T GET THROUGH THEM TO *PURSUE!*

HE'S LONG GONE BY NOW, ANYWAY...

MUST HAVE HEARD OR SEEN ME *COMING*--

BUT HOW COULD I *FALL* FOR IT?

GETTING *CARELESS*... TOO PREOCCUPIED WITH *JASON*... LOSING MY *SHARPNESS*...

BETTER CALL THE *FIRE DEPARTMENT*...

...AND THEN PRAY THAT THIS DEFEAT FOR *BATMAN* DOESN'T SPILL OVER INTO MY UPCOMING FIGHT AS *BRUCE WAYNE*.

--PREPARED THAT PHONY *DEATH SCENE* TO CATCH ME *ASLEEP*.

CONCLUDED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

EPILOGUE:
A REMOTE CAVERN IN THE GOTHAM HILLS:

I'VE *TOLD* YOU, HELLSTROM -- OUR ARRANGEMENT IS STRICTLY *BUSINESS*. THE *IDEA* WAS *MINE* -- THE *PLANNING* *MINE* -- AND THE *EXECUTION*, *YOURS*.

OUR RELATIONSHIP ENDS *THERE*--

-- TO OUR MUTUAL *PROFIT*.

BUT I TELL YOU I *DEFEATED THE BATMAN* TONIGHT!

HAS *ANTON* EVER DONE *THAT* FOR YOU?

OF *COURSE* NOT!

ANTON KNIGHT CANNOT EVEN *ESCAPE PRISON* WITHOUT *YOUR HELP!*

HE *WILL*, HELLSTROM... SOME NIGHT WHEN THE MOON AND STARS BECKON IN JUST THE *RIGHT VOICE*...

AND *ON* THAT NIGHT, *DREAMS* SHALL COME *TRUE*...

... AND ONCE AGAIN THE DARKNESS SHALL BE RULED BY *NOCTURNA* AND THE *THIEF OF NIGHT*.

CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF 'TEC:

THE SLAYER OF NIGHT!